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CHARLTON
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Charlton Classics presents

HERCULES



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HE WALKED AMONG MEN, EARTHBOUND BUT HERCULES FOUGHT FOR HIS RIGHT TO DWELL UPON OLYMPUS WITH ZEUS, WHO WAS HIS FATHER AND ABOVE ALL GODS. IT WAS A RIGHT HE WOULD HAVE TO EARN, FACING DANGER NO MAN OR GOD HAD ENCOUNTERED BEFORE OR SINCE IN THE ASTOUNDING...

ADVENTURES OF THE MAN-GOD HERCULES

YOU'RE A STUBBORN
DEVIL AND VERY BRAVE
AND STRONG! I BELIEVE
I'VE MET MY MATCH!

THE GODS ASSIGNED HIM NINE DEADLY TRIALS, AND THE FIRST WAS A FIGHT TO THE DEATH WITH THE FEARED NEMEAN LION. BUT POWERFUL, FEARLESS HERCULES WAS DESTINED TO ENCOUNTER OTHER DANGEROUS ENEMIES -- MEN WHO WERE DETERMINED TO DESTROY HIM!

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FAR ENOUGH, HERCULES! BEYOND THAT POINT ONLY THE GODS MAY ROAM!

HEAR ME, OH ZEUS! YOU ARE MY FATHER, SO I AM PART-GOD. I BEG TO BE ALLOWED TO BE WITH YOU!

HALF-GOD IS NOT ENOUGH, MY SON. THIS I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE!

ALCMENE, MY MOTHER, IS NO MORE. WHILE SHE LIVED I WAS WITH HER. NOW WHAT MUST I DO TO BE WITH YOU, FATHER?

EURYSTHEUS, WHO RULES ON SUCH MATTERS, HAS DECREED THAT YOU MUST PERFORM NINE LABORS, GO THROUGH NINE TERRIBLE TRIALS TO PROVE YOU ARE WORTHY TO TAKE YOUR PLACE AMONG US!

I'LL DO ANYTHING! WHAT ARE THESE TRIALS, FATHER?

THE FIRST, HERCULES... GO TO NEMEA AND KILL THE GREAT LION THERE. I WARN YOU, THE BRUTE HAS KILLED A DOZEN STRONG MEN WHO SET OUT TOGETHER TO DESTROY HIM!

A DOZEN MEN, FOUR DOZEN MEN! I HAVE THE STRENGTH OF A HUNDRED! I GO AT ONCE TO FIND AND HURL MY SPEAR INTO THE HEART OF THE NEMEAN LION!

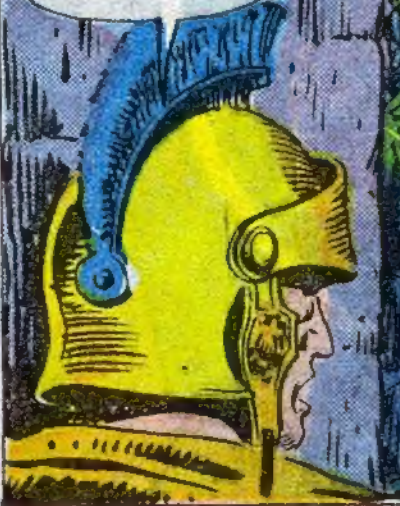
THE MIGHTY GREEK GIANT RETURNED HOME ONLY TO GET HIS SPEAR AND A BUNDLE OF FOOD. HE WAS EAGER TO UNDERTAKE HIS FIRST LABOR...



WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, HERCULES?

TO NEMEA, IN SEARCH OF THE GREAT LION, CAPTAIN. ZEUS, MY FATHER, HAS ORDERED THIS IF I AM TO JOIN HIM...

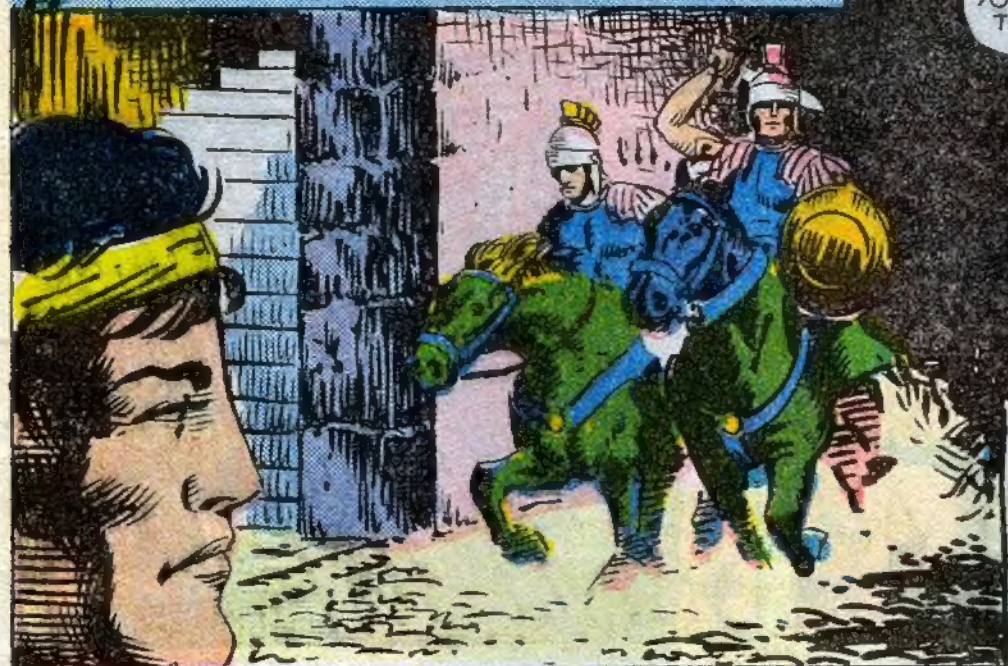
ZEUS, YOUR FATHER, INDEED! KING PHILIP HAS HEARD A RUMOR...WELL, NEVER MIND. HE HAS ORDERED THAT YOU STAY HERE AND TAKE PART IN THE GAMES!



THEN GIVE HIM MY REGRETS, CAPTAIN. I AM IN A HURRY!



KING PHILIP'S OFFICER ROARED A COMMAND, AND...



YOU WOULD DEFY YOUR KING'S WISH...? THEN YOU MUST DIE!



SEND FOR YOUR ARMY, CAPTAIN. BUT WOULD THE KING BE PLEASED IF YOU KILLED ME? WHO WOULD PUT ON SUCH A SHOW IN HIS GAMES AS ONLY I, HERCULES, CAN DO?

THE CAPTAIN, FEARING THAT HERCULES WAS RIGHT, REPORTED TO KING PHILIP...

FOOL! IF HERCULES FACES THAT LION, HE'LL DIE ANYHOW! I'LL ALLOW NO MAN TO DISOBEY ME! AFTER HIM--STOP HIM! BRING HIM BACK, ALIVE OR DEAD!

AYE, YOUR MAJESTY I LEAVE AT ONCE!

IT WAS NOT VERY LONG BEFORE HERCULES, WHO HAD STOPPED ON THE ROAD TO NEMEA TO REST IN THE SHADE AND TO EAT HEARD...

HORSES... CARRYING SOLDIERS IN SEARCH OF ME, I SHOULD IMAGINE...

HERCULES FORDS THE STREAM AND LIFTS THE FALLEN BRIDGE...

COMING AS FAST AS THEY ARE AND NOT SEEING THIS WASHED OUT BRIDGE, THOSE POOR FELLOWS COULD BE SERIOUSLY INJURED!

THE KING'S MEN THUNDERED INTO SIGHT, THEN ONTO THE BRIDGE THAT WAS SUPPORTED ONLY BY THE MAN-GOD'S POWERFUL BACK...

NOW--!!

EXPLAIN TO THE KING,
CAPTAIN, THAT IT'S A
HOT DAY AND YOU
STOPPED TO COOL
OFF IN THE
STREAM!



WHEN AT LAST HE REACHED NEMEA,
HERCULES SOUGHT FOOD AND
SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT...



HELP!
PLEASE
HELP
ME!



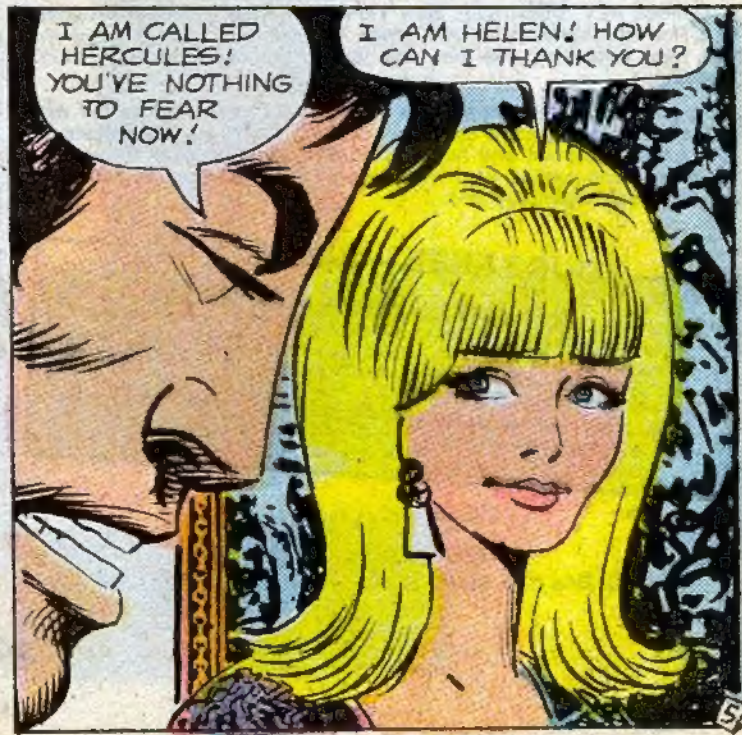
HANDS
OFF,
YOU
FOOL--!

IF I DO WRONG,
I SHALL APOLOGIZE
LATER!



I AM CALLED
HERCULES!
YOU'VE NOTHING
TO FEAR
NOW!

I AM HELEN! HOW
CAN I THANK YOU?





I COULD USE FOOD AND SHELTER, PRINCESS HELEN!

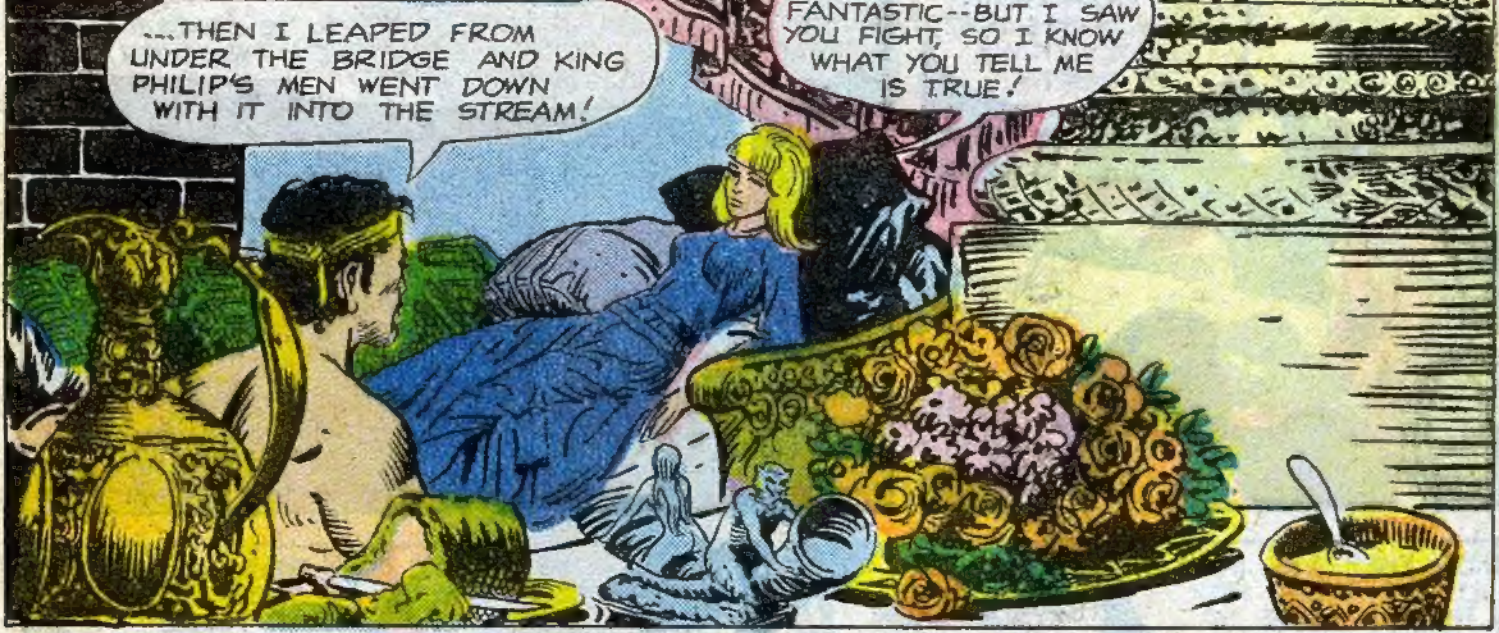
THEN YOU KNOW WHO I AM, HERCULES...?



NOW THAT I'VE HAD A GOOD LOOK AT YOU, YOUR ROYAL GARMENTS, YES, I SAW YOU AT THE GAMES, IN THE ROYAL BOX, IN SPARTA!

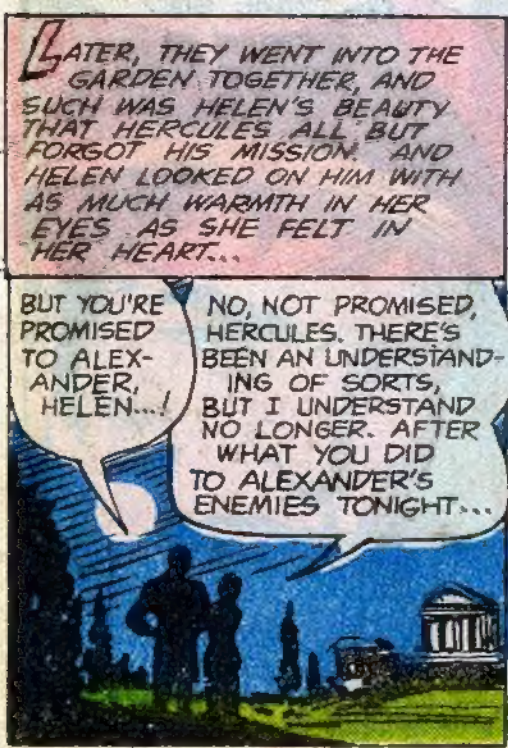
OF COURSE...YOU FOUGHT THERE, A DOZEN MEN AT ONCE! COME, I'LL SEE THAT YOU'RE FED AND MADE COMFORTABLE FOR THE NIGHT!

WHILE HE DINED, HERCULES SPOKE OF MANY THINGS WITH BEAUTIFUL HELEN. BUT NOT A WORD DID HE SAY OF HIS MISSION, FOR WHO WOULD BELIEVE EVEN SO UNUSUAL A MAN TO BE A HALF-GOD?



...THEN I LEAPED FROM UNDER THE BRIDGE AND KING PHILIP'S MEN WENT DOWN WITH IT INTO THE STREAM!

FANTASTIC--BUT I SAW YOU FIGHT, SO I KNOW WHAT YOU TELL ME IS TRUE!



LATER, THEY WENT INTO THE GARDEN TOGETHER, AND SUCH WAS HELEN'S BEAUTY THAT HERCULES ALL BUT FORGOT HIS MISSION. AND HELEN LOOKED ON HIM WITH AS MUCH WARMTH IN HER EYES AS SHE FELT IN HER HEART...

BUT YOU'RE PROMISED TO ALEXANDER, HELEN...

NO, NOT PROMISED, HERCULES. THERE'S BEEN AN UNDERSTANDING OF SORTS, BUT I UNDERSTAND NO LONGER. AFTER WHAT YOU DID TO ALEXANDER'S ENEMIES TONIGHT...



YOU OWE ME NOTHING, NOT EVEN GRATITUDE. YET I MUST ADMIT I'VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH YOU, HELEN!

AND I WITH YOU, DEAREST HERCULES!



ALEXANDER!



WHO IS THIS... THIS BEGGAR?

HE IS HERCULES OF SPARTA--HE SAVED ME AS THREE MEN FROM ARGIVE WERE CARRYING ME OFF!



YOU HAVE MY GRATITUDE, HERCULES. YOU'LL BE ON YOUR WAY NOW OF COURSE?

I'VE ASKED HIM TO STAY, ALEXANDER. YOU OWE HIM MORE THAN GRATITUDE--UNLESS THAT'S ALL YOU THINK I'M WORTH!

ALEXANDER, COUSIN TO BOTH HELEN AND KING PHILIP DID NOT REPLY, FEARFUL OF LOSING HIS BELOVED... IF HE HAD NOT ALREADY LOST HER TO HERCULES...



THE ARGIVES WOULD HAVE USED YOU TO CONQUER US, HELEN... AND HAD YOU BEEN THEIR PRISONER, I'D HAVE YIELDED!



NOW THEY WILL INVADE TO GET THEIR WAY. THEY'LL HAVE TO FIGHT. I'LL WELCOME DOING BATTLE WITH THEM...

WILL WAR COME SOON, ALEXANDER?



WITHIN A FEW DAYS. THEIR FORCES ARE AT OUR BORDER NOW!

I BEG TO BE ALLOWED TO FIGHT AT YOUR SIDE, SIR!

ALEXANDER READILY ACCEPTED HERCULES' OFFER, FIRST TO GET HIM AWAY FROM HELEN, AND THEN IN THE HOPE THAT THIS POWERFUL GIANT MIGHT BE LOST IN BATTLE. HE, WHO WAS TO BE KNOWN AS ALEXANDER THE GREAT, WAS READY WHEN A COURIER BREATHLESSLY ANNOUNCED THAT THE ENEMY WERE ON THE PLAINS OF NEMEA.

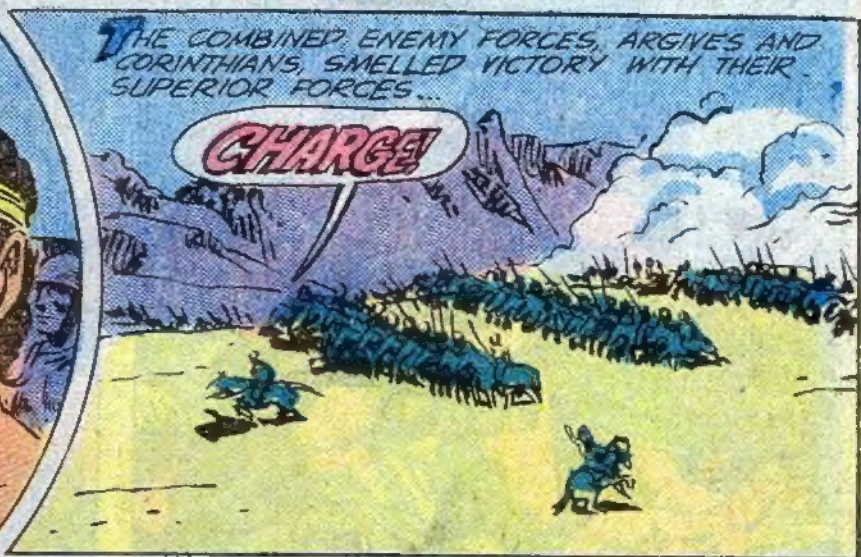


GIVE NO QUARTER, HERCULES, AND EXPECT NONE!

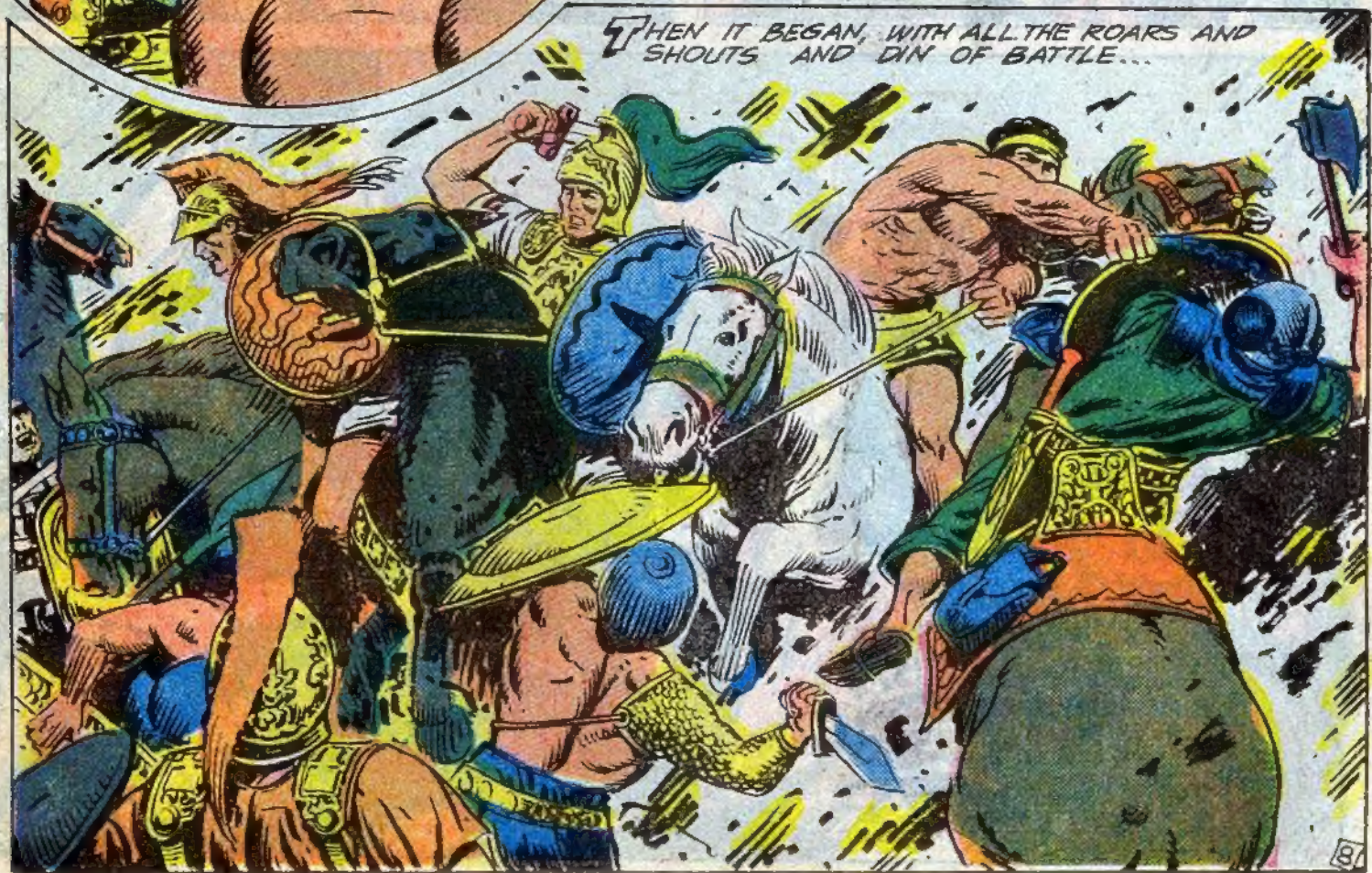
I'VE DONE BATTLE BEFORE, PRINCE ALEXANDER. I KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT AND WHAT TO DO!

THE COMBINED ENEMY FORCES, ARGIVES AND CORINTHIANS, SMELLED VICTORY WITH THEIR SUPERIOR FORCES...

CHARGE!

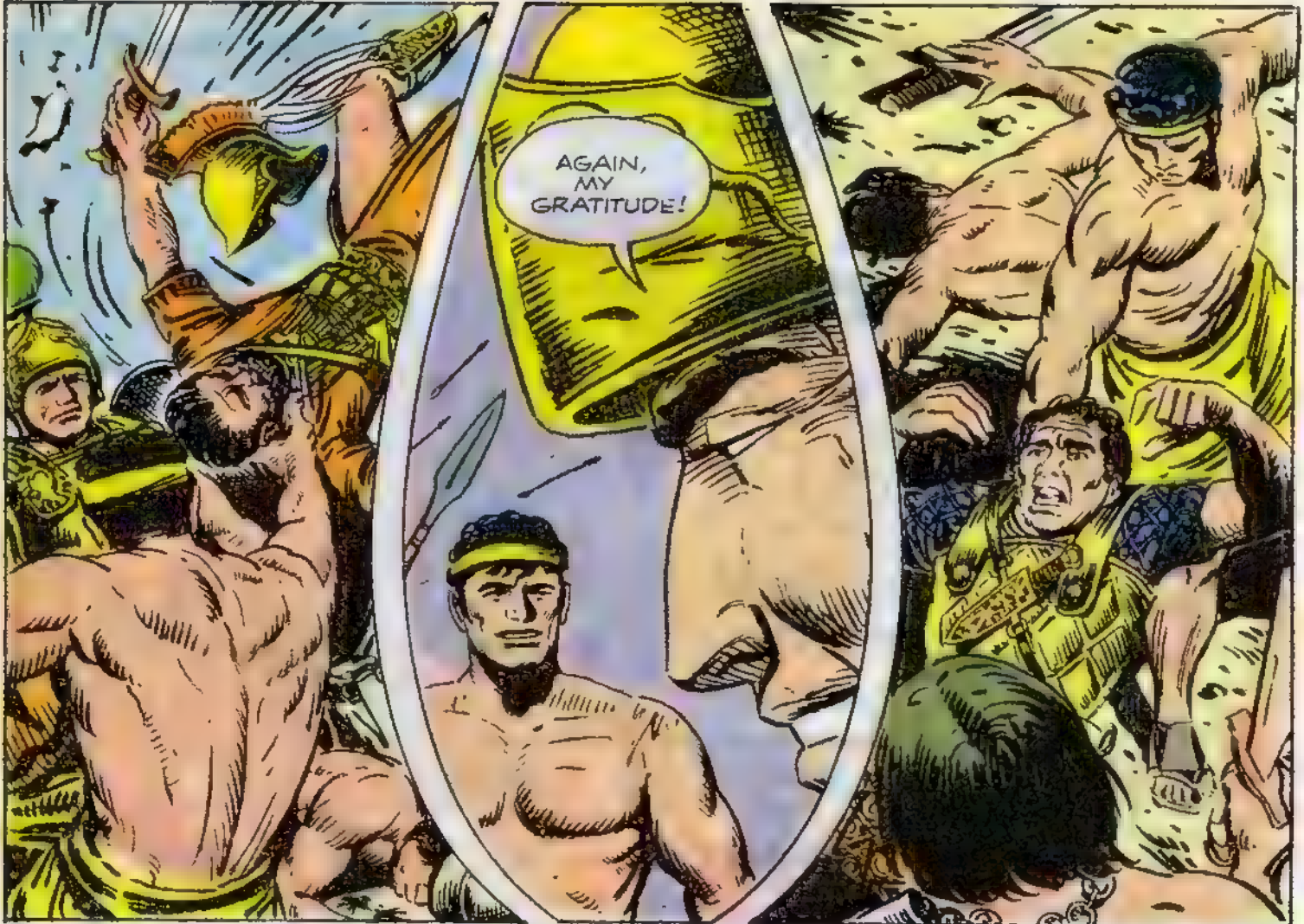


THEN IT BEGAN, WITH ALL THE ROARS AND SHOUTS AND DIN OF BATTLE...

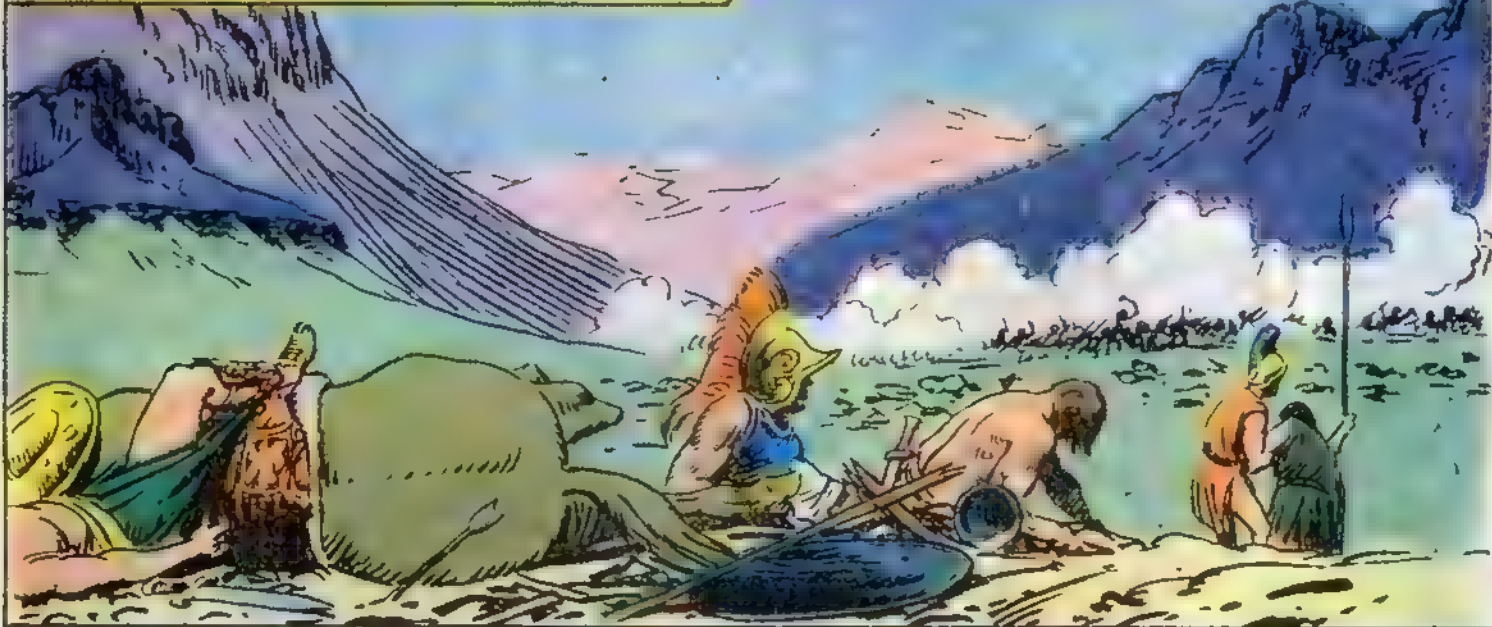


NO WARRIOR THERE FOUGHT MORE VALIANTLY THAN DID PRINCE ALEXANDER. NOR DID ANY DO BATTLE WITH MORE RELISH THAN THE MIGHTY HERCULES, FOR EACH BLOW, HE TOLD HIMSELF, WAS FOR HELEN, WHO MUST SUFFER FOR ANY DEFEAT...

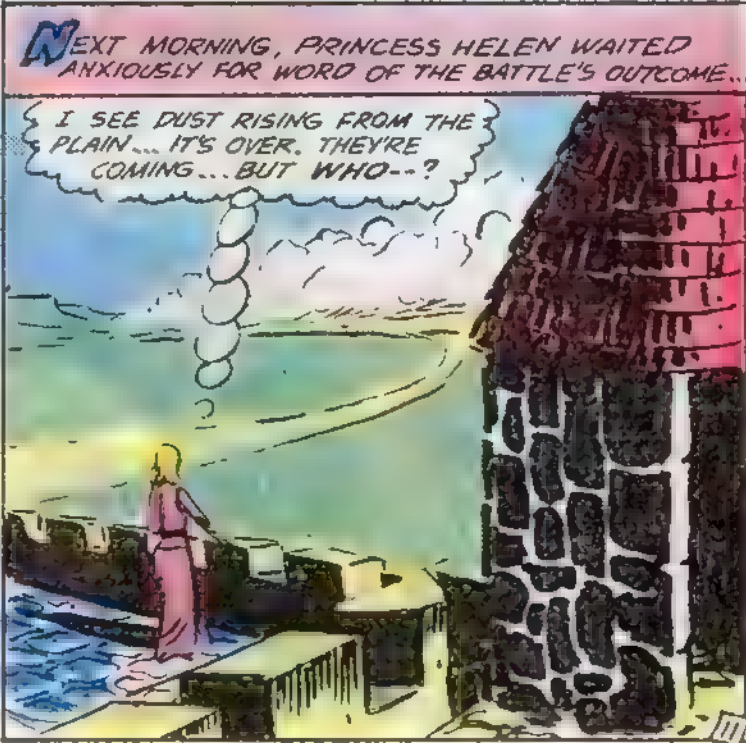
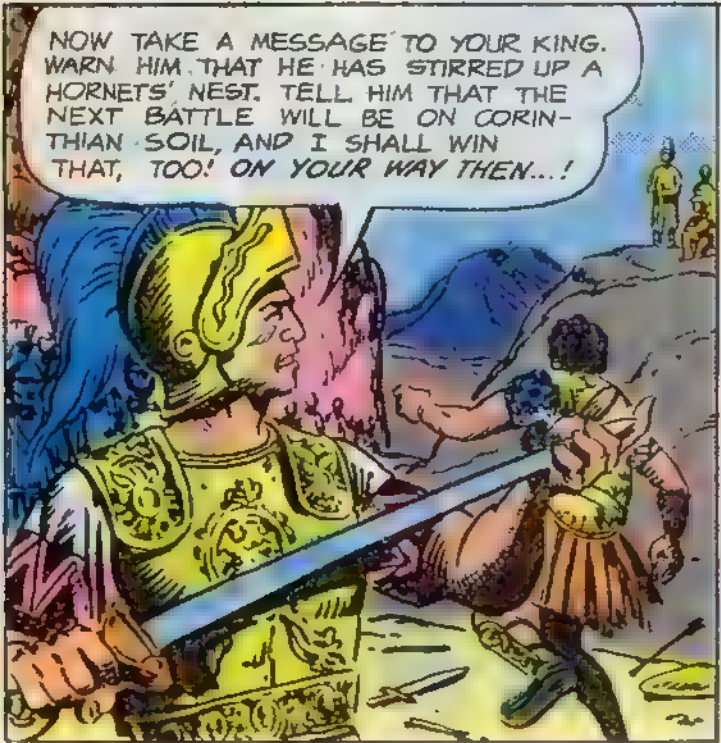
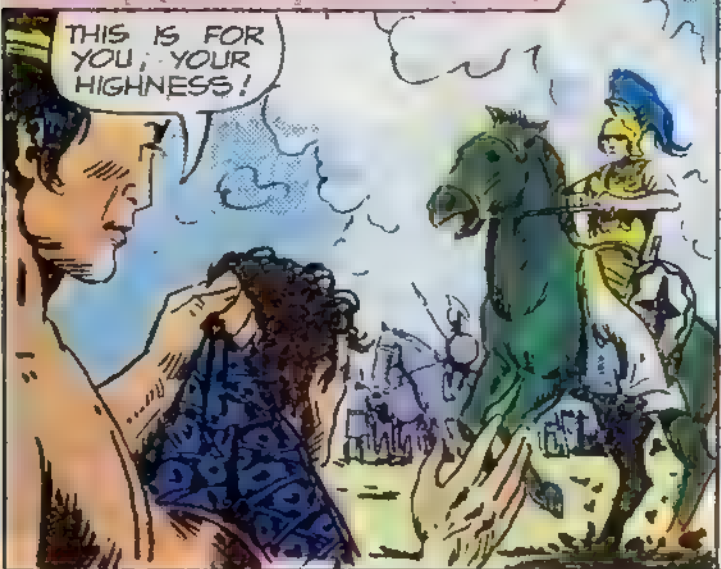




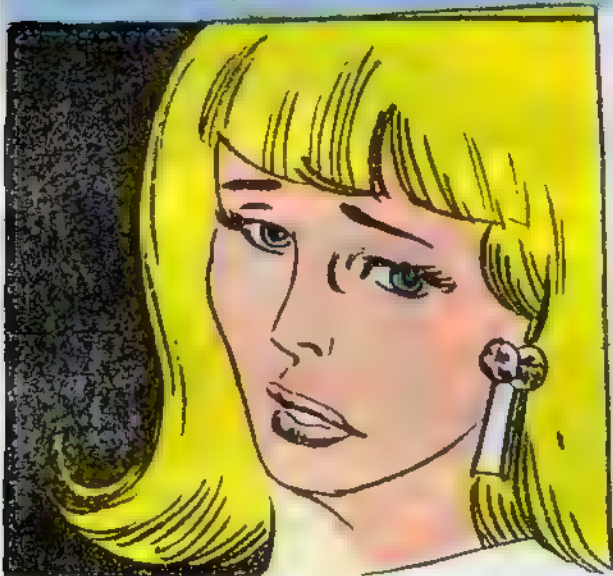
THAT THE ARGIVES AND CORINTHIANS TOOK TO THEIR HEELS WAS IN NO SMALL PART DUE TO HERCULES' POWER AND DAUNTLESSNESS IN BATTLE. BUT NOT ENTIRELY, FOR A GREAT GENERAL, ALEXANDER, LED THE GREEKS...



ALEXANDER AND HIS ARMY PURSUED THE ENEMY TO THE BORDERS OF NEMEA BEFORE THE SPLENDID PRINCE CALLED A HALT. THEN THE VICTORS RETURNED TO WHERE HERCULES WAITED WITH HIS PRISONER.



HELEN'S HEART POUNDED AS SHE RAN TO THE CENTER OF NEMEA, WHERE, IN THE BROAD PLAZA ALEXANDER WOULD REWARD HIS WARRIORS AND SEND THEM TO THEIR HOMES. BUT HER HEART POUNDED WITH LOVE AND WITH FEAR FOR THE SAFETY OF ONE MAN, HERCULES...



THEY CAME, AND ALEXANDER SALUTED HELEN FROM ACROSS THE PLAZA. BUT HIS DUTY FIRST WAS TO HIS TROOPS. NOT SO WITH HERCULES...



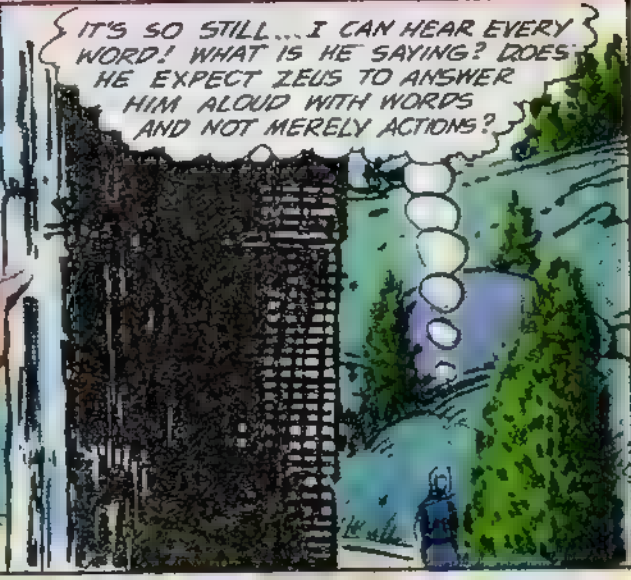
WAS IT TERRIBLE, HERCULES? I WAS SO AFRAID FOR YOU!

YOU MUST HAVE PRAYED TO THE GODS, MY HELEN. I MUST GO UP TO THE TEMPLE OF ZEUS AND THANK HIM FOR HIS HELP IN BATTLE...

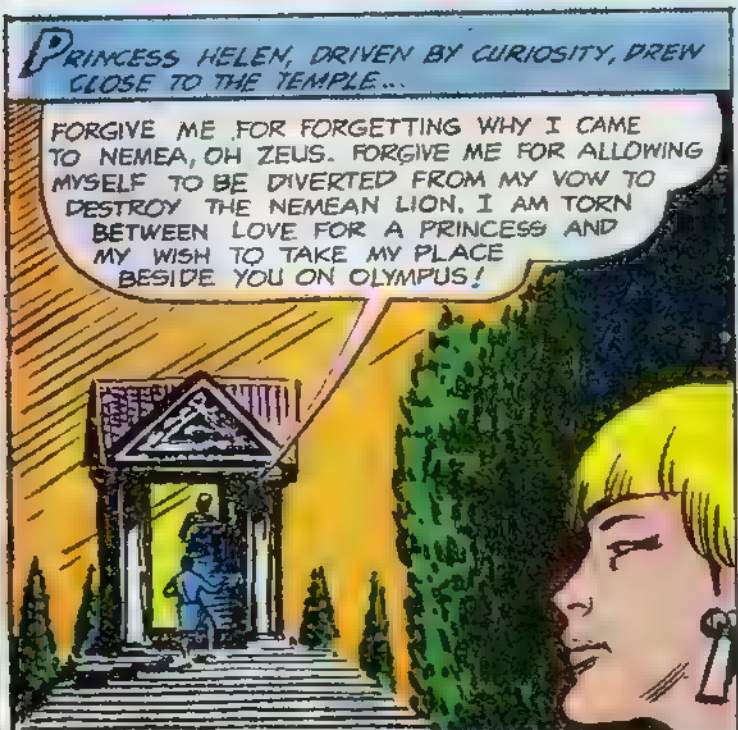
TOGETHER THEY CLIMB A HILL OF NEMEA WHERE STOOD THE TEMPLE OF ZEUS, THEN HELEN STOOD BACK, NOT WISHING TO INTERFERE WITH HERCULES' MEETING WITH THE HIGHEST OF THE GODS...



... BUT IT IS NOT ONLY TO THANK YOU FOR PROTECTING ME IN BATTLE, MY FATHER. I ASK YOUR ADVICE...

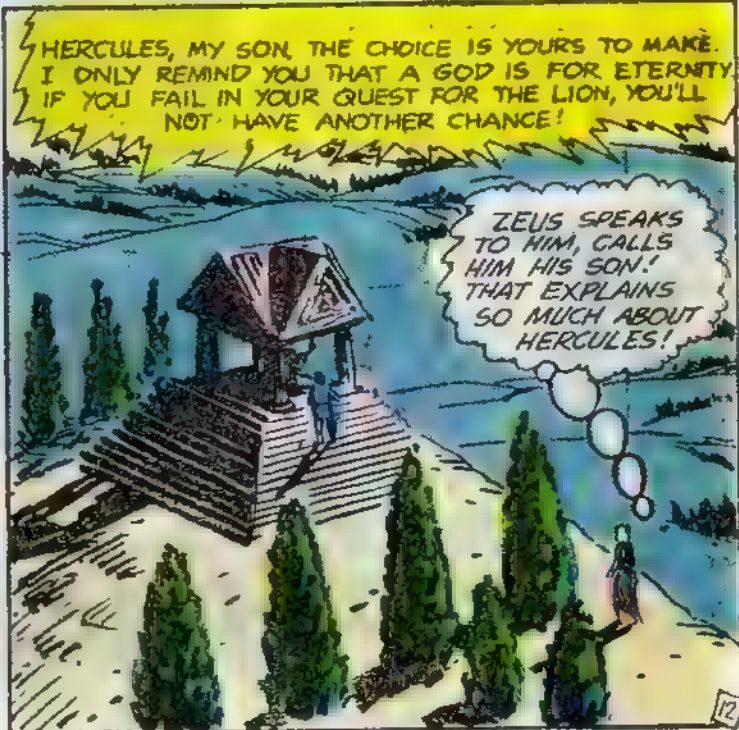


IT'S SO STILL... I CAN HEAR EVERY WORD! WHAT IS HE SAYING? DOES HE EXPECT ZEUS TO ANSWER HIM ALOUD WITH WORDS AND NOT MERELY ACTIONS?



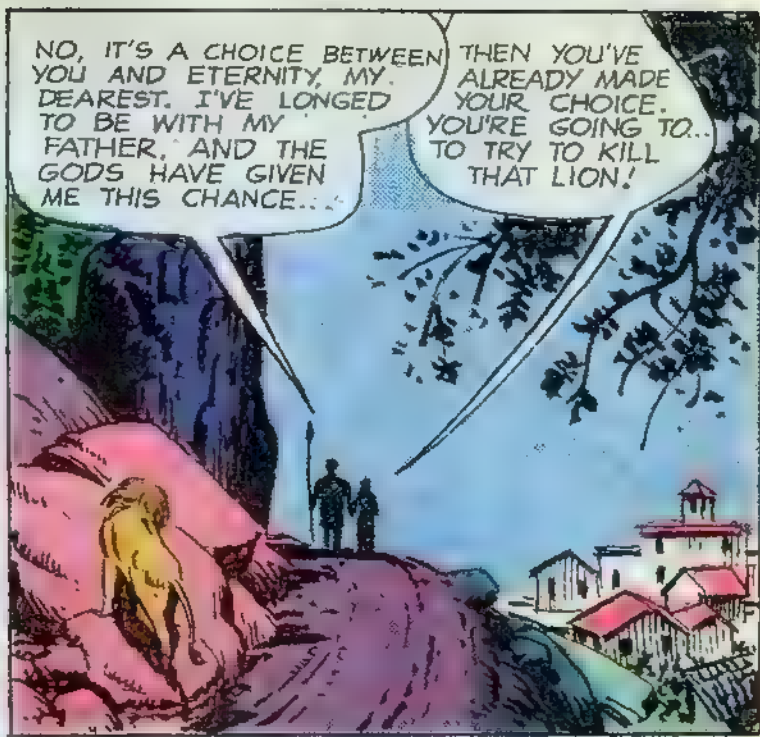
PRINCESS HELEN, DRIVEN BY CURIOSITY, DREW CLOSE TO THE TEMPLE...

FORGIVE ME FOR FORGETTING WHY I CAME TO NEMEA, OH ZEUS. FORGIVE ME FOR ALLOWING MYSELF TO BE DIVERTED FROM MY VOW TO DESTROY THE NEMEAN LION. I AM TORN BETWEEN LOVE FOR A PRINCESS AND MY WISH TO TAKE MY PLACE BESIDE YOU ON OLYMPUS!

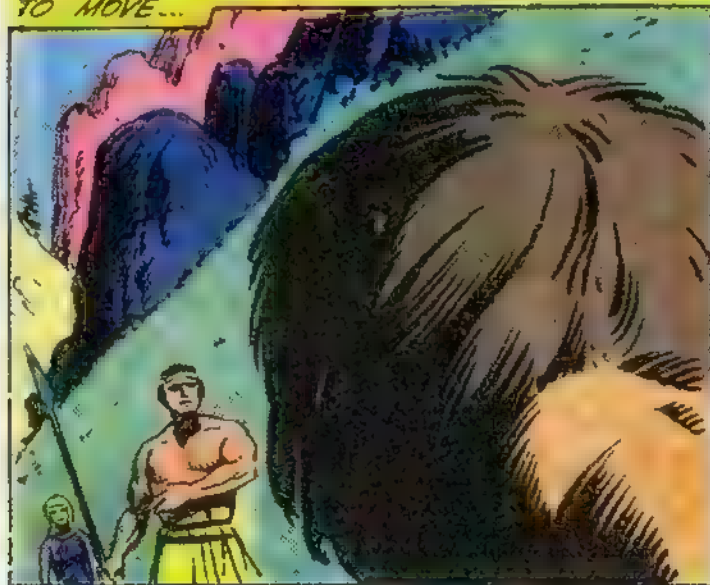


HERCULES, MY SON, THE CHOICE IS YOURS TO MAKE. I ONLY REMIND YOU THAT A GOD IS FOR ETERNITY. IF YOU FAIL IN YOUR QUEST FOR THE LION, YOU'LL NOT HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE!

ZEUS SPEAKS TO HIM, CALLS HIM HIS SON! THAT EXPLAINS SO MUCH ABOUT HERCULES!

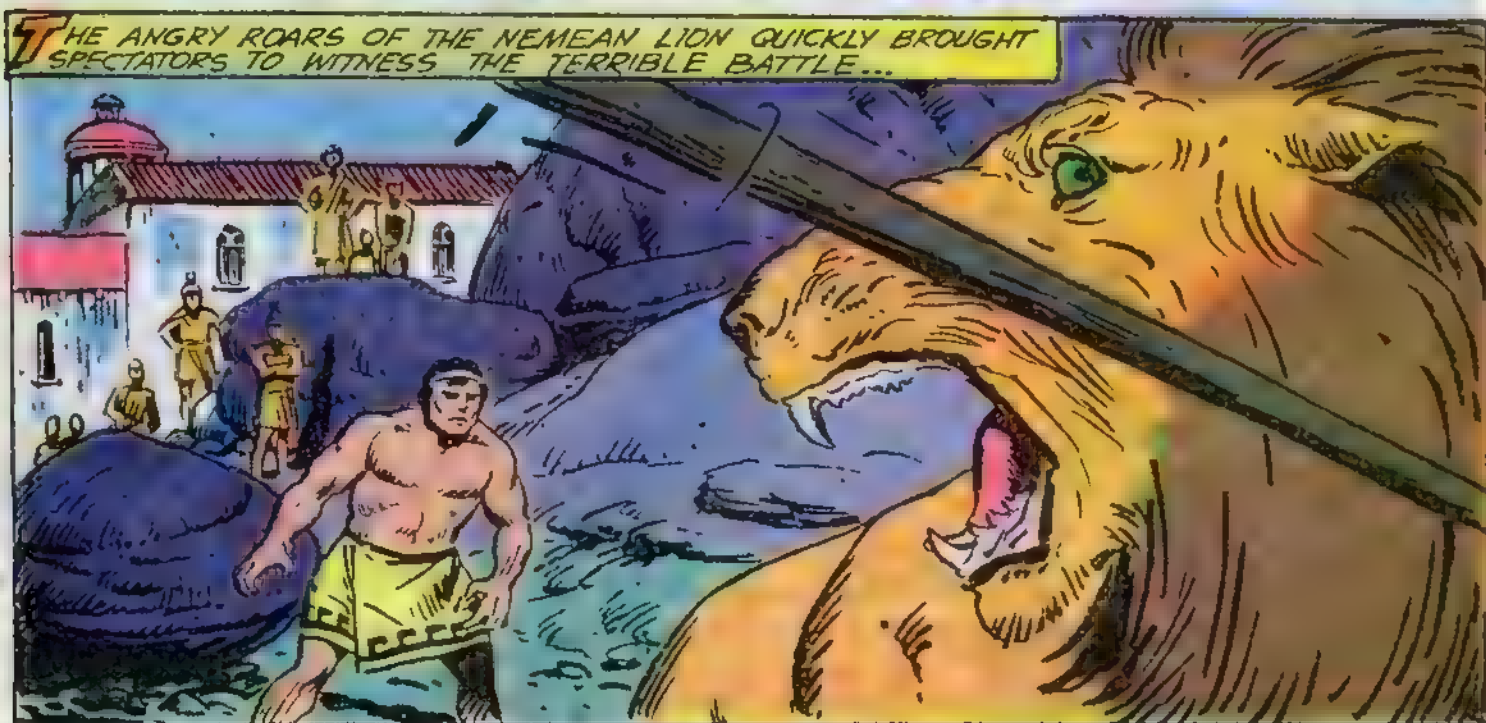
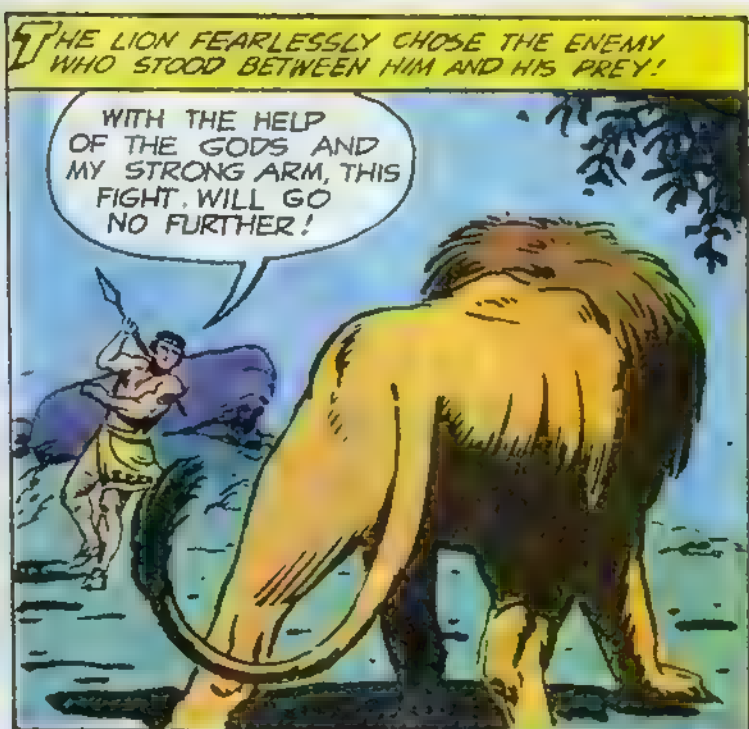


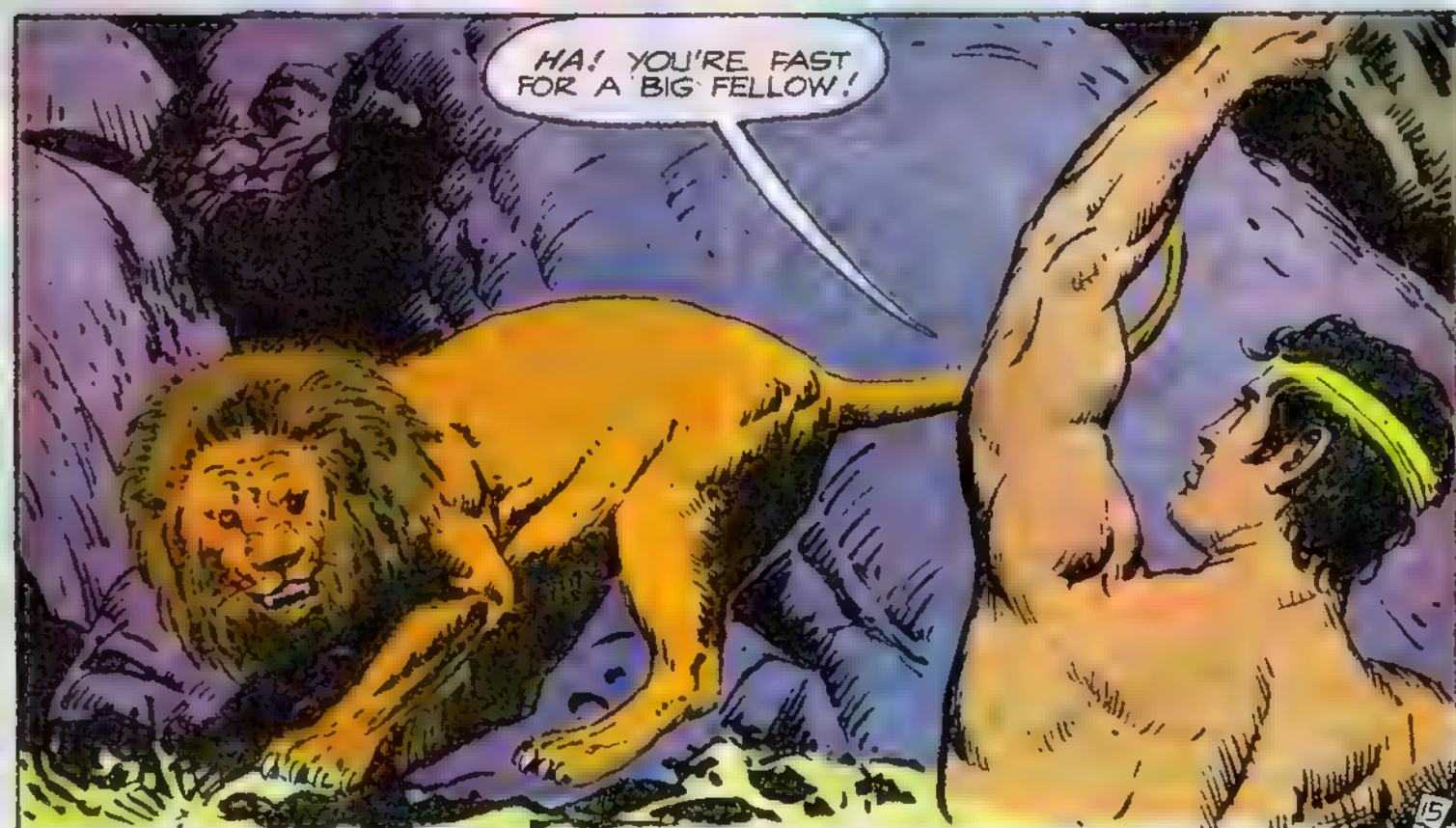
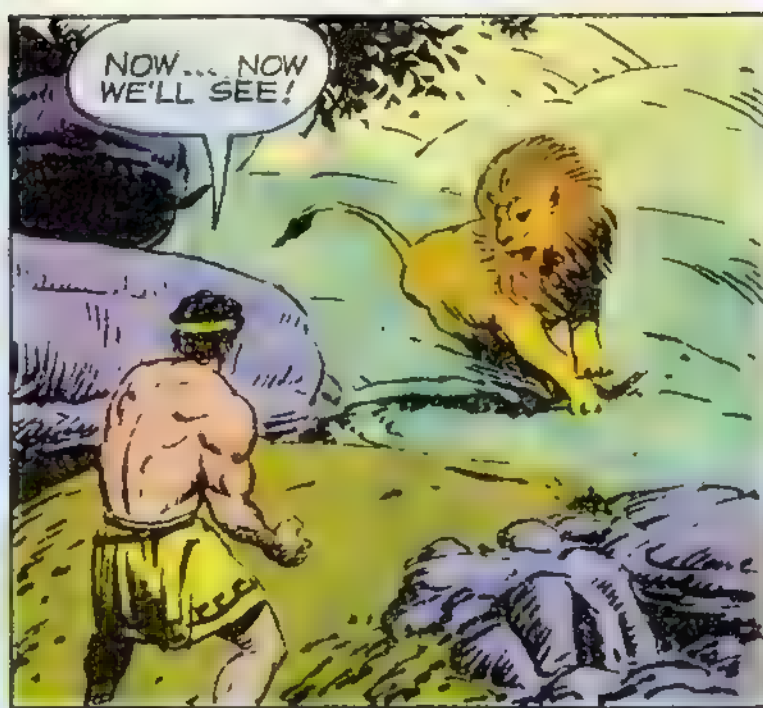
SUDDENLY, HELEN FELT A PRESENCE. A LOW SNARL FROZE HER IN HER TRACKS THAT DREAD THING, THAT HAD CARRIED OFF SO MANY OF THE PEOPLE OF NEMEA WAS THERE, AND SHE WAS TOO FRIGHTENED TO MOVE...



BUT HERCULES WAS WITHOUT FEAR...







AGHHH... SO YOU'VE
DECIDED AGAINST
CHARGING AND SPRINGING,
EH? WELL, I'LL FIGHT
YOU ON YOUR OWN TERMS...
MY STRENGTH AGAINST
YOURS!



THEN, LOOSING A ROAR OF HIS OWN, HERCULES SWUNG WITH ASTOUNDING, ALMOST CATLIKE GRACE, ONTO THE GREAT CAT'S BACK...

HO-ROHARR!



HA... AT LAST,
THE WAY I
WANT IT!

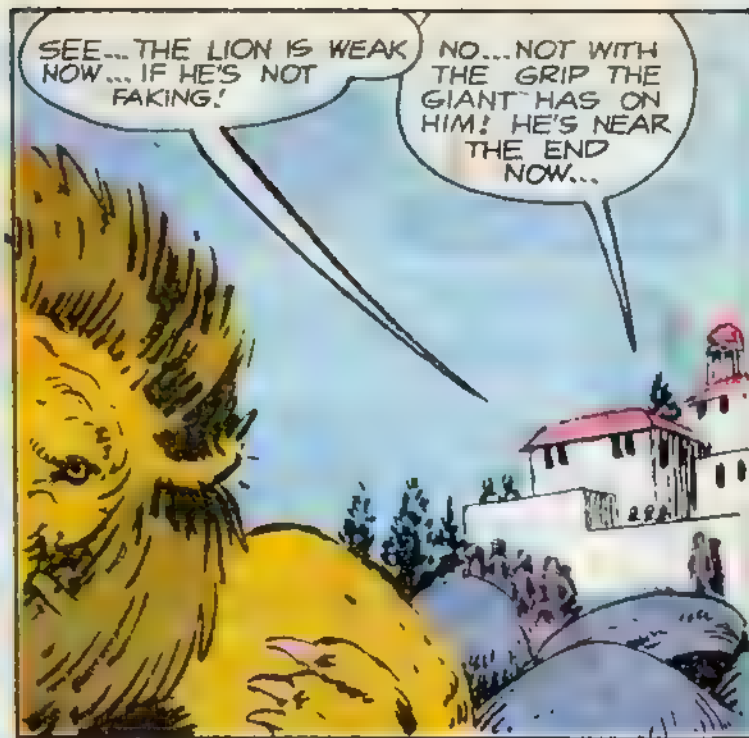


THEN ONE VIOLENT DEATH STRUGGLE...



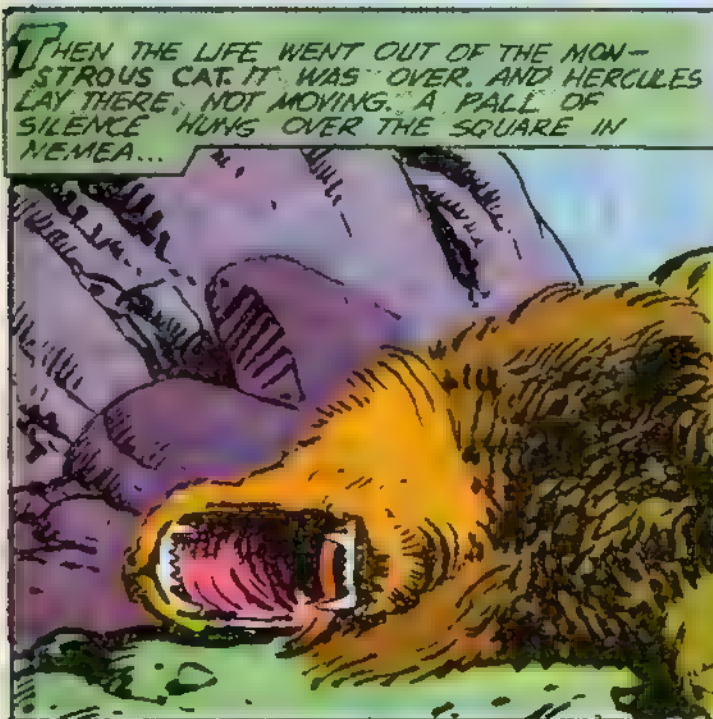


A LITTLE... MORE... NOW!

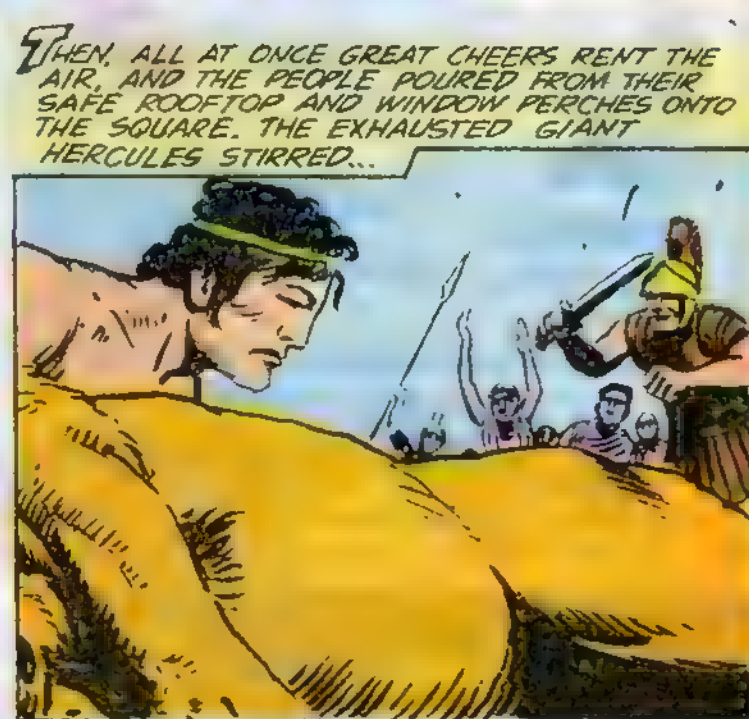


SEE... THE LION IS WEAK NOW... IF HE'S NOT FAKING!

NO... NOT WITH THE GRIP THE GIANT HAS ON HIM! HE'S NEAR THE END NOW...



THEN THE LIFE WENT OUT OF THE MONSTROUS CAT. IT WAS OVER, AND HERCULES LAY THERE, NOT MOVING. A PALL OF SILENCE HUNG OVER THE SQUARE IN NEMEA...



THEN, ALL AT ONCE GREAT CHEERS RENT THE AIR, AND THE PEOPLE POURED FROM THEIR SAFE ROOFTOP AND WINDOW PERCHES ONTO THE SQUARE. THE EXHAUSTED GIANT HERCULES STIRRED...

NOW THE TOWNSPEOPLE BRAVELY CHARGED AT THE LION WITH SPEARS AND SWORDS, BUT HERCULES ANGRILY STAYED THEIR THRUSTS...



THE LION FOUGHT WITH COURAGE. ANYONE WHO SO MUCH AS PRICKS HIS HIDE WILL ANSWER TO ME-- AND I HAVE PLENTY OF STRENGTH IN RESERVE! NOW, WILL SOME OF YOU HEROES PREPARE A GRAVE FOR HIM?

ONLY AFTER THE LION WAS BURIED BY THE SHAMEFACED MEN DID HERCULES MAKE HIS WAY TO THE TEMPLE ONCE MORE...

YOU SAW, ZELLS...I HAVE FINISHED MY FIRST LABOR SUCCESSFULLY. THE NEMEAN LION DIED BY MY HAND!

YOU CHOSE WELL AND YOU HAVE DONE WELL, MY SON. NOW, AFTER YOU HAVE RETURNED TO SPARTA, YOU WILL LEARN WHAT YOUR SECOND LABOR IS TO BE...!



IT IS TIME FOR A LAST GOODBYE, AND THIS WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR ME THAN A FIGHT WITH A DOZEN ANGRY LIONS!



SOON, HERCULES WAS BACK IN THE COURTYARD OF ALEXANDER'S CASTLE...

IT'S SETTLED THAT HELEN AND I ARE TO WED. I FEARED FOR AWHILE I MUST ADMIT, THAT I'D LOST HER TO YOU, HERCULES!

BAH! WHAT SORT OF HUSBAND WOULD A BUNGLING MONSTER SUCH AS I MAKE FOR SO DELICATE A BEAUTY?



I OWE YOU SO MUCH, HERCULES... MY LIFE. IF YOU WILL ACCEPT THIS SWORD AS A TOKEN...

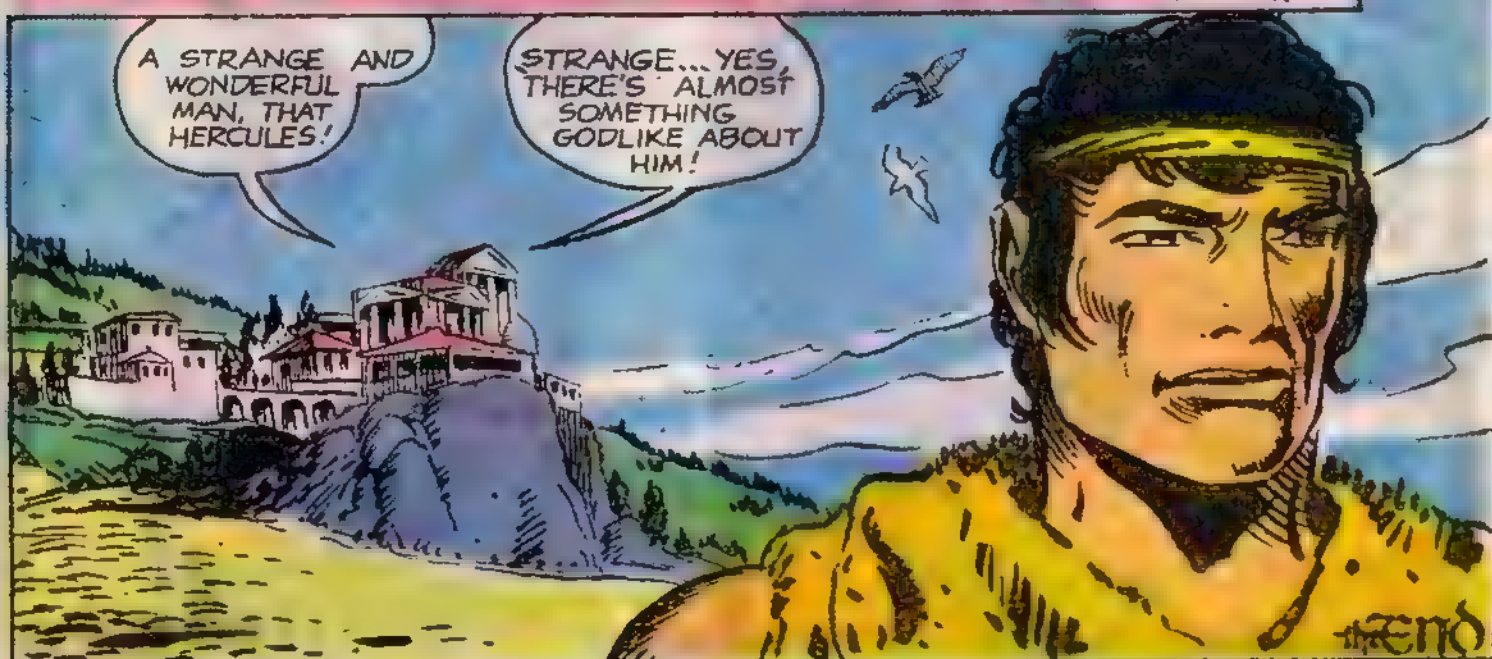
PLEASE, NO, YOUR HIGHNESS... ALEXANDER. WEAPONS TEND TO GET IN MY WAY WHEN I FIGHT. BUT MY THANKS...!



NO MORE WORDS WERE SPOKEN, BUT FOR A BRIEF MOMENT HELEN'S EYES HELD HIS. THEN HERCULES TURNED AND WENT ON HIS WAY. THEY WENT OUT TO WATCH HIM GO...

A STRANGE AND WONDERFUL MAN, THAT HERCULES!

STRANGE... YES, THERE'S ALMOST SOMETHING GODLIKE ABOUT HIM!



The gods are severe against those who would break their laws. Their justice is swift and sure, but, as it is on Earth, there are those who would twist the law for their own gain....

YOU MUST BELIEVE ME, ZEUS! I DIDN'T KNOW THE STAG WAS FROM YOUR SACRED FOREST. ORION TOLD ME THAT IT WAS FAIR GAME!

ORION IS MY OFFICIAL GAMEKEEPER AND HUNTER. HE WOULD NOT MAKE SUCH AN ERROR. WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY, ORION?

ORION

EDITOR: GEORGE WILDMAN
WRITER: NICK CUTI
ARTIST: DOU NEWTON
D-6440

THE YOUTH LIES! HE KILLED THE STAG TO IMPRESS HIS GIRLFRIEND WITH HIS SKILL AND CUNNING! HE TRIES TO MAKE FOOLS OF US, OH MIGHTY ZEUS!

I HAVE HEARD ENOUGH! IT IS TIME TO MAKE MY JUDGMENT...

GUILTY!

The young man's death had served a purpose for Orion, because now he was free to stalk a more delicate game without the interference of rivals.

I KNOW HOW YOU FELT ABOUT HIM, CLORA, BUT I COULD DO NO LESS THAN TELL THE TRUTH.

I FORGIVE YOU, ORION, BUT IT IS NOT ONLY FOR HIM THAT I'M CRYING, BUT ALSO FOR MY FAMILY.

MY MOTHER IS AN OLD WIDOW WITH THREE DAUGHTERS TO CARE FOR, AND NOW WE HAVE NO MAN TO PROVIDE FOR US. WE ARE POOR AND WILL SURELY STARVE!

I WILL PROVIDE FOR YOUR FAMILY. IT IS THE LEAST I CAN DO. AND PLEASE ALLOW ME TO TAKE YOU TO YOUR HOME.

YOU ARE A GENEROUS MAN, ORION. MY FAMILY WILL BE GRATEFUL, AND I, ESPECIALLY, WILL FIND SOME WAY TO SHOW MY GRATITUDE.

SHE IS FLIRTING WITH ME. PERHAPS SHE DID NOT LOVE HIM AS MUCH AS I THOUGHT.

For many weeks Orion kept his promise by supplying food for Clora's hungry sisters and mother, hoping to capture Clora's love. Although she was obviously grateful, her feelings never blossomed into stronger emotions...

I HAVE BROUGHT YOU PHEASANT TODAY. IF YOU COOK THEM PROPERLY, THEY WILL BE QUITE DELICIOUS.

OH, THANK YOU!

WHERE IS CLORA?

SHE IS ON ONE OF HER MOONLIGHT WALKS THROUGH THE SACRED FOREST AND ASKED ME TO TELL YOU TO JOIN HER THERE.

A close-up of Orion's face, showing a wide, toothy smile. He has dark, curly hair and a beard. The background is a bright yellow light.

ENJOY YOUR MEAL. I SHALL RETURN IN A FEW DAYS WITH MORE MEAT FOR YOUR TABLE.

YOU ARE A KIND MAN, ORION.

Orion is walking through a dark forest. He is shirtless and has a bow slung over his shoulder. A yellow speech bubble is above him.

Orion's walk through the woods is interrupted by a visit from the queen of the forest...

Orion is looking up at a large, full moon in the sky. He is standing on a grassy hill. A speech bubble is next to him.

WHAT'S THAT UP AHEAD, STANDING AGAINST THE MOON?

Orion is looking at a deer standing on a grassy hill. He is holding a bow. A speech bubble is next to him.

WHAT A MAGNIFICENT CREATURE! STRONG MUSCLES, A FINE HEAD... ZEUS WOULD HAVE MY NECK IF I LET ANYTHING HAPPEN TO HER!

Orion is looking at a deer standing on a grassy hill. He is holding a bow. A speech bubble is next to him.

Then, as quickly as she appeared, she was gone...

I'LL HAVE TO WATCH OUT FOR HER. SHE'LL MAKE A GOOD GIFT FOR CLORA.

YOU SAW THE DEER?

Orion and Clora are standing on a grassy hill. Orion is holding a bow. A speech bubble is next to him.

YES, I SAW THE DEER, BUT WHY DOES IT CONCERN YOU?

THAT DEER WILL PROVIDE FOOD FOR MY FAMILY FOR A LONG TIME. IF YOU LOVE ME AS MUCH AS YOU SAY, THEN YOU'LL KILL IT!

It was a full, bright moon...
a hunter's moon
for a hunter.

THERE'S THE
DEER'S TRACK,
BUT WHAT'S THIS?
WOLVES! THEY'RE
AFTER HER
ALSO!

I MUST GET TO
THE DEER BEFORE
THEY DO!
I MUST NOT
LET THEM ROB
ME OF MY
KILL!

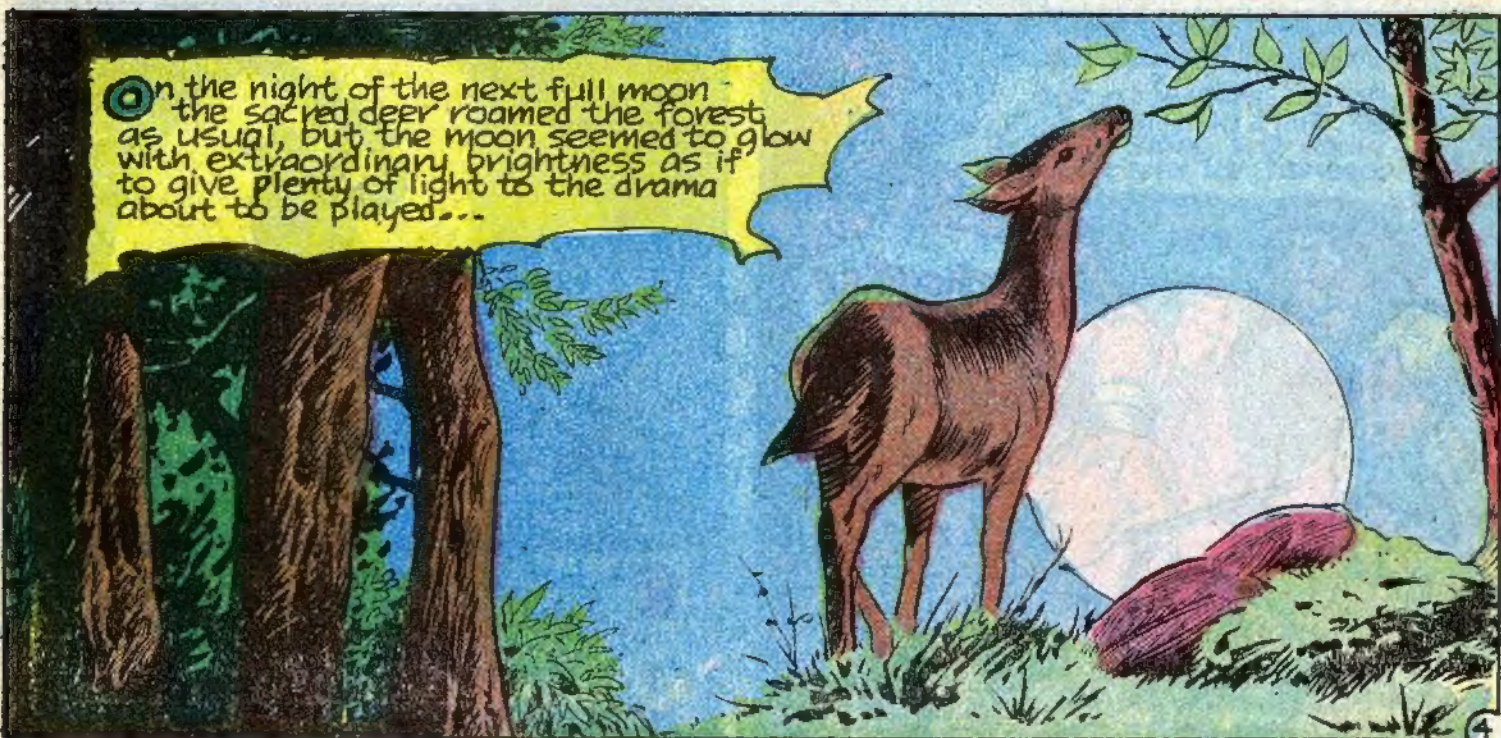
SO, THE
BUTCHERS HAVE
ARRIVED AHEAD
OF ME...

BUT IT'S
STILL NOT
TOO LATE!

Each snap of Orion's
bowstring sends a
shaft through the
heart of a grey killer!
Soon those that are
not dead flee for
their lives, for not
a single arrow
has missed its
target.

The deer is used to looking upon the
Gods as protectors, so it does not
flee from Orion. Perhaps the expression
in her dark, limpid eyes is that of
gratitude...

RUN, YOU FOOL!
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE
ME, BUT AT LEAST
TRY! DON'T JUST
STAND THERE
LOOKING AT ME
THAT WAY!



Never before had Orion paused to question a kill. Hesitation, even for a moment could have meant failure...



But he now realized that twice his love for Clara had caused him to commit an unlawful act.



He was no longer a hunter, but a criminal!



The hunt ended swiftly for the deer. She died instantly as the point of the arrow pierced her heart!



I HAVE THE DEER. WHERE IS YOUR OLDEST DAUGHTER?



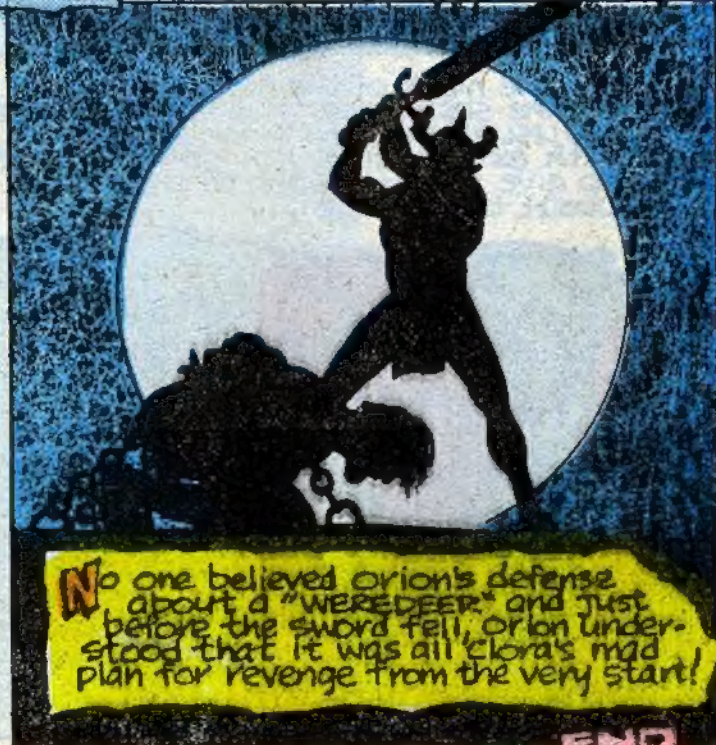
A short time later, the hunter arrives at Clara's house to show off his kill...

MAY WE SEE IT... PLEASE?

Orion gives in to the girl's pleadings, but when the game sack is opened, all are shocked!



No one believed Orion's defense about a "WEREDEER" and just before the sword fell, Orion understood that it was all Clara's mad plan for revenge from the very start!



END